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PHILOSOPHY SERIES THREE 6th and 7th Degrees



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EXPERIENCING THE DIVINE (THE DIVINE REVELATION IN THE CHRIST)

The Great Object Lesson ... The Christ and the Life of the Soul ... What Would Jesus Do?
The Death of the Christ ... Making the Most of the Christ Revelation

Beloved Companion:

No doubt you have already met the ancient problem of all who have tried to cultivate acquaintance with the Divine - the wide gulf between flesh and spirit. You have probably carried your quest to the point where that problem has become a serious one. It is so hard to work with what you cannot see.

I. The Great Object Lesson.

Neighboring tribes were always asking the Jews where was this God they talked so much about. Sensebound people in all ages have asked it. It was not an easy question, but it had to be met. Men had no means by which to meet it, so God provided the means in the revelation of Himself in the Christ.

We are told that God cannot be seen, yet we need desperately to see Him. Otherwise how can earth-people like us know He is real, what He is like, what are His attitudes toward things in our realm of life, and how one must act to be like Him?

How are we even to know that flesh and blood can attain to any real understanding of the Divine, much less share in its nature? Indeed many people have insisted that it is beyond human reach, that the people who try to conform to the ideal of Godlikeness are worse than crying for the moon. Argument cannot answer these claims. What man needed was an object lesson, a demonstration, so God would cease to be a fallacy of abstraction to the doubting, and become a concrete reality.

The demonstration was given. God undertook to let us see Him. The only way it could be done was to show us a Man in whom the Divine Spirit dwelt. That is why Jesus came into the world. His most understanding disciple explained it by saying

that the Word became flesh, and we beheld His glory. Word means idea, and we can see an idea only when it is expressed in a physical form.

Thus, at this stage in your effort to find out what God is like, you have available a human picture of His nature, one which you may look at and study to your heart's content. Later you may do it through conscious, direct contact with the risen One, but at first you will have to do it through the writings of those who knew Him or knew others who did. For this purpose we have excellent accounts in the New Testament. They will help you along the way if you keep in mind the fact that you are looking at what God would be like, and what He would do, if He were a man. This gives us a chart to go by in our own development.

Consider what seeing God in the Christ did for these men who wrote the earliest books about Him, and what you have seen it do for others you know or of whom you have read. The picture of God in the Christ is not something one can look at and forget. As we look at it, The Word again becomes flesh - our flesh. He is our Great Companion.

Here again you may need to put aside, for the time being at least, such preconceived notions as you may have about the Man of Galilee. For a little while disregard all the theological, sectarian, or personal ideas you may have, and think of Jesus only as a human picture of God - a portrait of the Divine set in the frame of a human life. As you go along you will cease to be troubled about the questions men debate concerning Him. For instance, the question whether He is human or divine, will cease to have any meaning, for you will learn by experience that He has to be BOTH in order to accomplish the At-onement between the human and the Divine.

Hear now a parable: A man had a dear friend who went to live in another part of the world. The years passed, and the two communicated as they could but saw each other no more. After many years, word came that the friend had passed out of this life. The remaining one was grief-stricken. One day word came that a son of his lost friend was coming to see him. When the son at last stood before the man he looked like his friend had looked when he went away, and it was like seeing him again in the flesh, and the lonely man wept for joy at the realization it gave him. Looking at Christ brings us close to God in just such a way.

As you restudy the life and teachings of the Christ, try to FEEL that it is a very PERSONAL Companionship you are experiencing. Do not think of Him as a historical character, or a picture in a book, or a name on a page. Think of Him rather as a LIVING Personality with whom you visit and from whom you learn. Try to sense the WARMTH of His heart and the friendliness of His nature.

If you do that your hours with Him will be GIANT ones, and you will find Him doing for you just what He said He came to do - proclaim release to the captives. His viewpoint and attitude will increasingly become yours, and the purpose of the divine revelation in Him will be accomplished in you. You will think of Him no more as a theological argument, but as the Son of God who came to make the Father real to you. Your religious life will gradually cease to be a belief and become an experience.

How are you to know that Jesus really lived? You will never know it by making or hearing arguments. Start out along the road He would travel, and when you meet Him YOU WILL KNOW He did live and does live. At first the perception may be

slight, but you will be surprised how VIVID it can come to be as you keep up the Companionship.

II. The Christ and the Life of the Soul.

The Christ was the Divine Spirit living in a man. The human element made it necessary to maintain and cultivate His soul life with care, which He did. Study the ways in which He cared for the life of the spirit, as a demonstration of how you may do it.

His program for living suggests that the spiritual life is something like a battery. As His daily labors and human contacts took more and more of His vitality, the battery ran low. Then, during what quiet hours He could find, and in some solitary place like the Mount of Olives, He would recharge the battery with MEDITATION and PRAYER.

His words to disciples and friends reveal the basic assumption that He and the Father were one. That oneness had to be guarded and preserved. Remember that He CAME to show the possibility of an at-onement for US. If HE had to be faithful in keeping that oneness strong and positive, we cannot expect to neglect it and maintain our acquaintance with the Divine. Certain effects of this stand out clearly in the life of the Master. Let us mention three of them, for it will do the same for you.

The first is that it kept Him KEENLY receptive to truth. We read that even in boyhood He matched wits successfully with the teachers of the law. In His public work He always had light to shed on perplexing questions, and He always had a ready answer even for those who tried to ensnare Him in His talk. His understanding was so clear and complete that we still call Him the Great Teacher; and our Great Companion.

The second is that it fortified Him against temptation and kept Him strong to make right decisions and choices. The story of His temptation in the wilderness shows how He stood firm against attacks levelled against the most vulnerable points in human motives. Was this because He was the Christ? No, it was because Jesus, the man, kept his defenses strong by the daily nurture of His inner life.

The third is that it gave Him poise and calmness in the face of any experience life could bring. He was not moved by the harshnesses of this world because He lived at a level where they were unimportant. One whose life is geared to the stars does not need to be concerned about will-o-the-wisps. One who marches through the years with his eyes on the infinite and eternal right need not be disturbed by the fact of temporary wrong. One whose life is anchored to eternity need not shrink even from a cross. Not by chance were these things true of Him, but BECAUSE He kept His spirit adjusted to the Eternal. These things YOU can learn from Him.

Herod, who tried to destroy Jesus in infancy, was a descendent of Esau, the man whose mind was on earthly desire. Jesus Himself was a descendent of Jacob, who sometimes stopped and looked up at the sky. Little did Jacob think after his dream at Bethel that far up his family line there would be One who would actually make the dream come true. One never knows to what wonderful things some experience of the day or some dream of the night may be the starting point. WATCH for such things. ALL the issues of life are IMPORTANT. THERE ARE NO ORDINARY DAYS.

Now let the Christ Himself become your chief devotional instructor. Study

His devotional habits and try them for yourself. Do not try to decide beforehand what will happen, for that will spoil it. Keep self out of it, and let happen what will. Like Him, just keep the door open. Do not let the Eternal have to knock, and wait, and come again.

III. What Would Jesus Do?

There is an active side to walking with God, for one has to keep in step. There is also a relationship side, for one must learn to do what God would do about human problems. What would that be? How is one to know? Look at the life of the Master; it will tell you.

You will find that His attitude toward people was one of good will, with only one exception. He had no patience with insincere exploiters of others and users of religion for their own advantage; but the average person, saint or sinner, found in Him a FRIEND. He did not denounce the weak, but sought to help him to be stronger. He was patient with the misled, for one cannot blame those who "know not what they do." He was tolerant of all honest, though mistaken, attitudes, for He knew it takes time to grow into a knowledge of the truth. His meeting with the woman at the well, the woman taken in adultery, the rough youths who became His disciples, and victims of circumstance like Levi and Zaccheus, are pictures of God dealing with such cases, and THEREFORE PATTERNS FOR YOU.

Jesus said He came to set men free, yet He did not take much part in drives, movements and causes. He did not seem to think the world could be reformed that way. His plan seemed to be that as men learn the truth it will make them free, and that the most one can contribute to a reform is a good, true life.

He did not even organize His disciples, or throw out any barrage of propaganda. He acted on the assumption that right human thinking and living will do it, and that they are more effective than anything else. You may not be able to organize and lead great crusades. No matter. If you live one human life in key with God, you will have done the most anyone can do toward setting the world to rights.

Yet the Master's dream of what human conditions should become was bold, sweeping and audacious. He envisioned a world in which all wrong shall have been righted, in which human woe shall have been entirely done away, and in which humanity has become so God-conscious that life itself is faith. The dwellingplace of God is with men, and they have become His peoples. This coming order Jesus called the Kingdom of Heaven.

All He did to bring all this about was to plant the idea in human thinking and leave it there to germinate, grow and mature. His disciples cared for it in their time, and others have continued to do so in each generation. Perhaps you can do something to cultivate it in your day, for it has had some very difficult conditions of soil and climate to meet. Perhaps, too, you can extend its area. All this will be good laboratory practice in learning to experience the Divine. Many people have not yet caught the idea. When enough people do get it the Kingdom will be here.

The Christ going about planting the Kingdom idea in human minds, scattering the truth before which fetters fall from human minds, wills, and aspirations - that is a picture of what God is doing. He seeks to give every plant and man enough self-confidence to live and grow.

Then why not accomplish the whole plan at once by destroying those who do not share it and empowering those who do? No, that is not God's way. His way is to give all that freedom; - a chance. He can wait, for some day truth and right will prevail. Do you wonder where you can meet God? Somewhere along these lines of effort you can find Him.

This is why John called Jesus a Word, or idea. Here is a divine idea at work in the world, breaking up the hard ground of wrong human thinking, forcing down the barriers to justice, releasing right motives in human hearts, concentrating on the world life the influences of love, mercy, justice and truth. An idea grows because it is alive. It has vitality. Move along with this idea, the Word. Open gates and build roads for it. You will find yourself working hand in hand with the Divine.

What would Jesus do about the situation that shocked you today? The merciful and helpful thing. What would He do in connection with the problem in human relationships that trouble you? The understanding thing. What would Jesus do in connection with the human weakness about which a friend has told you? The compassionate thing. Those who take advantage of life He smites, but life itself He heals and nurtures like a shepherd working with a sick lamb. There is your picture of what God would do, and what YOU must do to associate yourself with the Divine.

IV. The Death of the Christ.

The path the Master took in this process of revealing God in terms of human life led to persecution and death. Let us pause here and try to clear up any possible misunderstandings about that. For instance, does it mean that one who undertakes to follow Him in imitation of that revelation will necessarily have the same experience?

No, it may involve more or less of a clash with established orders of things, for the world is not yet in complete tune with the divine revelation, though it is more so than it was two thousand years ago. There may be people who will not understand you as you go on in your development. They may make it difficult, but they will not crucify you.

The death of Christ means something quite different. It is simply the completion of His revelation of the divine idea, the crowning effort to help you and all of us to see God more clearly. Why should that require His death? We will try to explain.

To reveal the divine in His life Jesus had to demonstrate the divine standard, viewpoint, and way of doing. He had to show us the highest idealism, yet do it in the most realistic terms. He had to take what was right and just, and hold to it regardless of the consequences.

The world of His day challenged it. It cut too deeply into the selfish and shallow ways of mankind. The Master was in terrible earnest, but so were the people who challenged Him. They meant to remove wholly from the world His way of thinking and doing.

For Jesus to have faltered in the face of that would have meant that He was unwilling to die for what He had lived for, and that would have meant that He was not in earnest about it after all. He had to vindicate His teachings at any cost. Otherwise both they and His example would have broken down, and no one would have given

either of them any further thought. His willingness to go to the cross proved to the world once and for all that He was ready to stand by what He had said and done.

Another reason for the death of the Christ was that He had to show His enemies and all others that it is not possible to destroy truth by killing a man. We may rear crosses, and burn books, and attack ideas; but the truth stands unchanged by anything we do. Men cannot drive God out of His universe with hate, weapons, and arguments. That had to be made clear to the ages. It also is a part of the divine revelation in the Christ.

A third reason for the death of the Christ was that men needed to be shown how God would meet death if He were in their places. Not all will be crucified or pass out of this life in any other prescribed way, but all must pass through the great transition. Is "so-called death" a thing to fear or not? Not to a true Mayan, a true Companion of the Order.

Those who are not in full harmony with the Divine may tremble, and shrink, and act as though they think death victorious. Those who walk with God will have no such fears. They know that to one with the SENSE OF ETERNITY whether the change from one stage of life to another takes place today or some other day is a matter of small importance.

The saints and martyrs of all ages have met the GREAT CHANGE with a smile, because they have seen in the death of Christ a revelation of the fact that the change is GOOD and not evil, that it is NOT the END of a BLIND road but the OPENING of an eternal thoroughfare. Without this the revelation of the Christ would have been sadly incomplete. Amen!

One other phase of the revelation of the Divine in the death of the Christ is that love sets NO limit on what it will do for its dear ones, and that it does not shrink from death. "Having loved His own", it was said of the Master, "He loved them unto the end." Anything that did less than that would not have been love. In the death of Christ, God demonstrated the divine parenthood, for a good father will endure anything for his children except that they turn away from him. If the Christ had not died this phase of the Divine would not have been shown us, and we would have been left in the dark about one of the most important things of all.

As you ponder these things concerning the death of Christ you will see that it is the crowning stage of the picture of God He gave us. It throws more light on our road than does any other one thing, and it makes it clear that THIS is a road one MUST travel ALL the way or not at all. Wherever it may wind, it leads to VICTORY.

V. Making the Most of the Christ Revelation.

The first thing to realize in making use of the human revelation we have in the life of Christ is that it is to be USED. It is a revelation of the ideal, but its value can be realized only by applying it in the affairs of life. Adore, worship, and praise the Master all you will; but the ESSENTIAL thing is to follow Him.

Do not make the costly mistake of thinking the divinity of the Christ's nature places His pattern of life beyond human reach. The PURPOSE of His revelation is to show that this is not the case, to make it plain that flesh and blood CAN live on godly levels. The human and the divine belong not apart but together. That is

PRECISELY what His life demonstrates.

Have you ever seen a small boy following his father and trying to step in his tracks? Perhaps he was having a hard time of it because he was small, but you knew if he kept trying he would do it better and better and he would grow and grow till one day he could match his father's steps with ease.

Jesus was so mature in soul that He could step in His Father's earthly tracks. You may not be able to do it very well at first, but the idea is to keep trying and GROWING until you can. The Christ came into the world to show us that it can be done, and how. This is the central purpose of His revelation. There is nothing magic about it. It is a very practical affair. As St. Paul says, we are saved not only by the death of Christ, but also by His life.

Hear another parable. A man had an idea in his soul, a kind of dream, a sense of beauty he had never seen. He often tried to describe it, but he could never make it plain. A few times he took pencil or brush and tried to picture it, but he could not. It was too elusive.

As time went on he decided that it was foolish to think so much about a thing so vague and uncertain. He had spent much time and energy on it, and all to no purpose. It would be better, he thought, to give his attention to things that had "reality", even if they were not so entrancingly lovely as this evasive sense of something that had possessed him. He put the thought aside, and all but forgot it.

One day he visited an art exhibit. Casually, he walked past the paintings, admiring and appraising them. He was almost ready to leave the place when he noticed a picture that stopped him in his tracks.

"That is it," he exclaimed. "That is the picture I have always sensed, but never could describe. Now I know it is real, because someone has seen it, or at least has sensed it too."

So long the idea of God was only a vague, haunting, beautiful, ethereal sense of something. When you survey the life and character of the Master you see a picture of the idea that has often haunted YOU, but the reality of which you never could quite capture till you found it demonstrated in the Master Life.

Hear still another parable. But please listen CAREFULLY. A man tried to operate a complex machine. He had received full instructions about the machine and how to use it, but somehow it did not respond to him. The results were awkward and inadequate, and he felt tempted to give up.

One day his employer brought in a former operator of the machine and asked him to demonstrate how it was done. The novice watched carefully. In the man's motions he could see what his mistakes had been. He got the idea. When the man was gone he grasped the controls with a feeling of naturalness and mastery. The machine responded, and he had no more trouble.

Jesus has done something like that for us who were trying so awkwardly to find and follow the Divine. He has come by and shown us how in a Godlike way to LIVE, MEET situations, MANAGE our attitudes, and DEAL with people. THEY are the ways we have been TRYING to do it, but SOMEHOW we couldn't get the RIGHT TOUCH BEFORE.

The revelation of the Divine in Jesus does not quite end with His death, nor even His return to the unseen. It reached its climax a few weeks later when a company of people became conscious of the divine spirit INSIDE, warming their hearts, illuminating their minds, and empowering their wills.

One of the names of Jesus had meant, God With Us, but on the day of Pentecost it became plain that a new stage of experiencing the Divine had been reached - GOD WITHIN US. The revelation of the Divine had begun as a still, small voice. Now, after a long, slow development, it has reached its climax in an inner presence of God directing life from the throne room of the heart. The search is no longer difficult or far. You need seek no farther than that to find Him.

You who are cognizant of the pass-words from the beginning to these high degrees, have before you that higher initiation into the realm of our Mayan GREAT COMPANION. The Revelation of the Divine began as a still, small voice which you heard long ago. In the throne room of your heart it is now present, and listening you will surely hear. Using the Christ revelation will lift you to even higher inspiration and greater gifts to give to mankind. Doing this, you have surely found Him.

May the Great Spirit Bless You and Inspire You
Your Class Instructor.